

Boroughs acting as district centres will spend all their library allocations on their own libraries and will receive other contributions for their services to surrounding areas. Other boroughs will keep 4s. a head from their own libraries and spend 2s. a head cooperatively with other libraries in the district. This cooperation will be administered by the district centre library. The contributions from counties will be paid to the district centres.

The Government subsidy will be paid in this way:

Two-thirds of the subsidy for the population of each district to the district centres.

One-third of the subsidy for the population of the whole region to the regional headquarters.

£25,000 has been estimated for Government expenditure on the region for this year.

By spending on books and staff rather than on transport, by concentrating specialised services at the regional headquarters, and by providing strong district centres within easy access of readers, it is hoped that residents in rural and urban areas will have a library service as good as any.

To keep the best features of the present system of local control all boroughs retain complete control of their own libraries. The local authorities concerned will elect representatives for the consideration of the Minister who will then set up a board with appropriate Government representation to discuss matters affecting the region and recommend accordingly.

Although the plan has been worked out in detail and a map has been prepared, no details have yet been accepted as final. It is possible that some of the district boundaries should be changed and other details can be altered if later discussions produce better ways and means. The population of the proposed region is just on 160,000.

Mr Skoglund in his statement said, "We are hoping that this will give the people of this region an improved library service. We shall need to watch it closely, perhaps for two or three years before we can decide that this is really the best way of doing it."

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## PRESERVATION OF NEW ZEALAND NEWSPAPERS

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The files of the many newspapers preserved in libraries, newspaper and local body offices throughout the country are exceedingly valuable to those engaged in research in the New Zealand history of any subject, but in particular for local history. Indeed they often provide the

only information available as well as being a valuable guide to possible sources elsewhere.

Newspapers are, however, difficult to preserve and keep in good condition, even when satisfactorily bound. Printed on poor quality paper which deteriorates fairly rapidly, they are hard to bind well. The resulting volume is bulky, takes up a good deal of space, and is easily damaged. Because of the size and relatively infrequent use they tend to be stored in remote spaces where things are far from perfect and further decay results.

The importance of newspaper preservation has long been of concern to the New Zealand Library Association as well as those interested in New Zealand history. At many conferences, speakers have drawn the attention of local authorities to the necessity to bind and preserve the local papers.

In 1938 Dr G. H. Scholefield published the *Union Catalogue of New Zealand Newspapers Preserved in Public Libraries, Newspaper Offices, etc.* This volume was designed to open up these valuable materials and to indicate to students what files were available and where they could be found. At the present moment the General Assembly Library is revising the list and bringing it up to date. The most notable feature that so far has come to light is not the fairly numerous papers that have to be added, but the number that were recorded in the earlier list, but which have since vanished.

For example, the *Northern Advocate* files for 1877-1909 have been lost, and runs (incomplete) of the *Bay of Plenty Press*, the *Hauraki Plains Gazette*, *Kaikoura Star*, *Golden Bay Times*, *Hokianga Star*, *Waikato Independent*, *Matamata Record*, *Putaruru Press*, and the *Taranaki Central Press*, as well as a few others, are no longer available. Such losses are much more serious than the loss of a set of a city newspaper, for this will often be held in three or four places. It is most unusual for more than one set of a provincial paper to be preserved and the permanent preservation of that file is very important.

It is true that some of the losses were unavoidable, as in two or three cases the losses were caused by fire or flood, though even these could be reduced if the papers were stored in a fireproof building above any likely flood level. In others, however, the papers seem to have been destroyed because the space was needed for other purposes and no one was sufficiently interested to take any steps to see that they were preserved. No attempt seems to have been made to approach a library or museum to see if it would take over the files, and the work of destruction was efficiently carried out.

At the last meeting of Council in February the Seminar for Librarians of New Zealand Collections drew attention to this loss and asked that the attention of the major libraries be drawn to their responsibility to maintain files of local newspapers, and urged that appropriate action be taken to minimise further losses. This note is written to publicise the resolution which Council agreed to.

The present situation is that files of newspapers are preserved in libraries, newspaper and local body offices, and occasionally in private

hands. The files in the hands of newspapers and local bodies are most susceptible to loss.

During the last twenty years the provincial press has suffered heavily, partly through the war and partly through competition from the metropolitan papers, caused by the improvement in transport and the widening areas they can serve. Many papers have ceased, many have changed hands or amalgamated with papers in other centres. The old office has been used for other purposes and the files destroyed or moved to another less satisfactory home where often they have been lost or irreparably damaged. Similarly in local body offices space has been needed for what is believed to be more important uses, and the newspaper files have suffered.

The best place for a newspaper to be housed is undoubtedly in the district whose history it principally records. Here it should have most use. But it is better to be housed well somewhere else than to be destroyed.

The local librarian can often assist in preventing the destruction of newspaper files. Frequently he is known to the editor and publisher of the paper and hears of their problems. When the possibility of disposing of back files is mooted, he is in a position to offer to house them or to advise of a library which would be willing to do so. Similarly he is in close touch with the Town or County Clerk.

If the local library is unable to take the files there are usually others prepared to do so. Over recent years, for example, the Hocken Library has been gathering in papers from the Otago province, and there are other libraries in provincial centres willing to do the same.

The General Assembly Library has in the past given a resting place to the remains of many newspapers and its already fine collection has been improved by such gifts. It will pay freight on newspapers presented to the Library.

Today the Parliamentary Library has about 10,000 bound volumes of New Zealand newspapers, not only those issued in the main centres but also many from the smaller towns. Since 1953 it has been micro-filming all papers other than those published in the four main centres, providing an almost complete coverage of the newspapers published in the country.

A questionnaire was recently sent out to all thought likely to have collections of newspapers and letters have been written to all replying. This pointed out that many valuable files had been lost, and asked anyone wishing to dispose of files to offer them first of all to the local library. If it was not interested then it was suggested that they should be offered to the General Assembly Library.

This is not, however, a situation that can be remedied merely by writing a series of letters. It calls for a constant watch to prevent further destruction by those who have been missed or who have forgotten. Any help that can be given to assist will earn the gratitude, not only of those interested in the history of New Zealand today, but even more of those who will use the newspapers in the future.